

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Rep. Stripp Urges Support for Measure to Protect Wetlands on Former Farm Properties**



Requiring non-farming owners of former farm properties to obtain permits before they can begin developing their land will prevent vulnerable wetlands and watercourses from being degraded or destroyed by intrusive residential or commercial projects, state Representative John E. Stripp, R-135<sup>th</sup> District, said this week.

“Activities carried out by farmers on or near wetlands and watercourses on their properties have little or no adverse effects and do not harm the fish, wildlife and plants that depend on them for sustenance. That is why they traditionally have not been subject to strict regulation by local land use boards. Unfortunately, thousands of acres of Connecticut farmland has changed hands over the past 30 or 40 years – and very little of that acreage now is being used for agricultural purposes,” Representative Stripp said in testimony Monday before the General Assembly’s Environment Committee.

Representative Stripp was speaking in favor of legislation (House Bill 5316) he introduced to require non-farming property owners to obtain permits for operations and uses in wetlands and watercourses located on land formerly owned by farmers who were allowed to conduct unregulated agriculture-related activities in those areas.

“Because farmers who formerly owned land containing wetlands, ponds, brooks or streams and were allowed to conduct agricultural activities on or near those areas, the new owners could make the legal claim that they should have similar rights,” Representative Stripp said. “The intent of my bill is to ensure that persons who buy farmlands they plan to use for non-agricultural purposes cannot degrade or destroy wetlands or watercourses located on those properties.”

“Connecticut’s wetlands and watercourses serve as habitats for insects, fish, birds and other wild animals,” Representative Stripp said. “If developers are given the same kind of unregulated use of these fragile areas that the farmers who preceded them enjoyed, many wetlands, brooks or small ponds could be modified, diverted or filled in and eliminated. It would mean the permanent loss of natural ecosystems that once gone, can never be replaced – as well as the possible extinction of many threatened or endangered species.”

“In a very real sense. Connecticut’s farmers also were the stewards of their land. Because

they made their living directly from it, they had a vested interest in preserving and renewing its natural resources and attributes that may not be shared by their commercial or residential successors,” Representative Stripp said. “The legislation I have proposed will help protect and preserve our threatened wetlands and watercourses for the fish, birds and wildlife that need them to survive and flourish – and for the enjoyment of those who come after us. I urge my colleagues in the General Assembly to support it as well.”